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ABSTRACT

In a university with a large black middle class population, a study using 35 undergraduate students was carried out to ascertain the validity of personality assessment--specifically the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI)--for black populations. The impetus for this study was the observation that an extremely high proportion of black personality profiles were invalid for instructional purposes in a personality assessment course. It appeared that the profiles of these black college students on both tests were grossly distorted toward the abnormal, probably due to differences in socialization between black and white populations. An average profile was developed for male and female black subjects. By comparing the profiles of the twenty-seven subjects who took both the MMPI and the CPI, it appeared that both tests could be viable means of prediction in the black community if they were properly standardized for that subgroup. It is believed that a new set of norms should be developed for the black subject (and any persons in the lower socioeconomic levels of society), since the present norms are obviously biased against such subgroups. (Author/CTM)

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Andre Joseph

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND THE BLACK PERSONALITY PROFILE

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in a large Southeastern University Complex noted for its large and reputable Black Middle Class population, a study was carried out to ascertain the validity of personality assessments (notably the MMPI - Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, and the CPI - California Psychological Inventory) in the Black community.

The impetus for this study was the observation that an extremely high proportion of Black personality profiles were invalid for instructional purposes in a personality assessment course.

A review of the literature, which is extremely limited, tends to suggest that a moratorium on interpreting profiles for Black subjects should be undertaken (Gynther, Flower and Erdberg, 1971). The general consensus of the literature seems to be that extreme differences exist between "normal subjects" and "socially isolated Blacks" (Gynther, Flower and Erdberg, 1971); no significant differences seems to appear for age or educational variables, but there appears to be distinct differences for sex, race and residence - with Blacks tending to demonstrate more deviant profiles than whites, and urban Blacks appearing even more deviant than rural Blacks (Erdberg, 1970). All other studies dealing with the Black personality as described by the MMPI were done on hospitalized Black subjects with the findings that there were no significant profile differences between Black and White males diagnosed paranoid-schizophrenic - but there were differences in traits and symptoms; with Southern Blacks having somewhat greater surface manifestations of pathological traits and admitting to more experiences that are viewed as odd and bizarre than

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whites. These maladjusted traits for Blacks were seen as adaptive behavior for this subgroup in an aversive social environment (Joseph, 1977). Further, Costello (1972) found no significant differences between Black and White male hospitalized patients and prison inmates - given matched demographic conditions. However, even with matched conditions Black and White females showed marked differences (this was said to possibly be due to the small sample used). Only one study on Blacks and the CPI was found. This study sampled 103 Black male undergraduates at Howard University (47 classified protesters and 56 non-protesters) and found protesters to be higher on poise, ascendance and self-assurance; with non-protesters being higher on socialization, maturity and responsibility. There was no significant differences seen on potential, intelligence, efficiency and interest (Anderson, 1970). There appears to be no studies of a comparative nature between the Black and White profile on the CPI.

In my research it was hypothesized that there are marked differences between the profiles (and this profile interpretations) for Black and White "normal populations," due to aversive social factors in the society; and that the reasons for there appearing to be no significant differences between hospitalized or institutionalized population is due to the a posteriori nature of these studies (i.e., testing of patients after hospitalization or institutionalization and then comparing test scores - I content that if the testing were done before hospitalization or institutionalization the similarities would already be present). I am thus suggesting that the "normal" Black profile would approximate the hospitalized and/or institutionalized White profile - due to the inability of both tests

(MMPI and CPI) to correctly diagnose the Black population; and that those Blacks who have been hospitalized or institutionalized on the basis of psychological interpretations of test batteries containing the MMPI and CPI could have possibly been wrongly incarcerated.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 35 undergraduate students at Georgia State University and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. 27 subjects (15 from Georgia State and 12 from Morehouse) took both the MMPI and the CPI (in that order). 8 other subjects took either the MMPI (3 from Georgia State) or the CPI (3 from Georgia State and 2 from Morehouse).

Materials

Each subject was given a copy of the MMPI form R test Booklet and an answer sheet and allowed to take as much time as was needed to complete the test. The same procedure was used for the CPI. Subjects took each test on separate days and all tests were individually administered.

RESULTS

By comparing the profiles of the twenty-seven (27) subjects who took both the MMPI and the CPI, it appears that both tests could be viable means of prediction in the Black community -- if they were "properly" standardized for that subgroup. However, presently it appears that the profiles of Black subjects on both the MMPI and the CPI are grossly distorted toward the abnormal. This distortion probably is due to the differences in socialization among the Black and White populations in

America, an aversive social environment for American Blacks, and even a possible difference in the deep structure of the English language as spoken by a majority of the Black population (Joseph, 1971).

By taking the fifteen male and fifteen female raw scale scores for each item on the MMPI, and the 15 male and 17 female raw scale scores for each item on the CPI, an "average profile" for male and female Black subjects was derived. An interpretation of the "average college Black male profile" (as per this study) when using the present norms (basically White standardized) appears to suggest that the average Black male is "relatively passive-dependent; likely seen as imaginative, somewhat sensitive and having a wide range of interest. He also appears to have somewhat bizarre and unusual thoughts or behavior and is relatively introverted. He is a bit of a worrier, somewhat rebellious, a deviate who is fearful, and has a lot of energy - which in social behavior may reinforce his alienation from others. He has somewhat of an inability to relate, or a fear of relating, which is considered a malignant sign prognostically. He appears not to know the rules of society, neither in a social nor internalized context. He will often find it difficult to stick to duties and to be responsible. Intellectually he will probably do best work when under the supervision of another person and when constantly encouraged and guided in doing the job."

The "average Black female profile" when interpreted according to the White norms, "appears to be someone who is fearful, introverted, and has a lot of discomfort in the form of anxiety, depression, and worries. She has somewhat bizarre and unusual thoughts or behavior and is somewhat

rebellious; however, her high fears probably prevent any extreme overt acting out behavior. She does not appear to have a clear understanding of the rules of society nor does she have much internal sense of what is expected of her in the society at large. She does not appear to be dependable but will probably be able to do a 'fair job' when someone supervises her work and constantly directs and encourages her actions."

As can be seen from the above interpretations of the "average Black profiles," when compared to the White norms, Blacks appear to be "somewhat unintelligent; to have bizarre and unusual thoughts; not to have an understanding of the rules of society and therefore to be fearful and untrusting - thus giving poor prognosis for psychological treatment." If these profiles were taken at face value, one would probably predict that the "average person" from this study would find it difficult or impossible to cope (on both a social and intellectual level) in society as it presently exists. However, one must be reminded that all of the subjects who comprised the sampling of this study were college students who were in fact academically and socially successful at that time.

It is believed that a new set of norms should be developed for the Black subject (and any persons in the lower socioeconomic levels of society), since the present norms are obviously biased against such subgroups. A possible alternative procedure would be to devise a "new profile sheet" for Black subjects. These profile sheets would be derived by taking the average raw scores on each scale for both the MMPI and the CPI and using that score as the norm raw score for the Black population. Then the numbering on the vertical lines could be changed to conform

with these new norms. By using this method the same tests could be used for both Black and White subjects - but a different answer sheet, based on new norms for the Black population, would be used with Black subjects. This would thus give equal T scores for both Black and White populations, making comparisons easier and eliminating the difficulties of trying to develop culture-free tests.

DISCUSSION

From this study it should be clear that when Black profiles are interpreted according to present norms on the MMPI and the CPI, a distorted and abnormal personality appears to be represented. This study used college students who are relatively middle-class by Black standards, but even their profiles appeared to be grossly distorted when interpreted according to the present norms. The sins of using the present norms for Black subjects, (especially those from the lower economic levels) is almost unimaginable. It is speculated that many a Black person has been incarcerated as a result of predictions made on these tests, and others like them, because they were being compared to a set of norms that were heavily biased against them.

By confounding the individual personality profiles an "average Black personality profile" was ascertained, which when clinically interpreted yielded the following results: Blacks are characterized by high levels of psychopathic deviation and schizophrenic tendencies, coupled with paranoid tendencies, which suggest a high 'acting out' possibility. The striking similarity of this "average Black personality

profile" and the "juvenile delinquent profile" prompted a search of the literature. The search revealed only a limited amount of research -- but that which was available was supportive of the present findings. The conclusion that personality inventories are culturally biased against the Black population was reached; even when those Blacks are taken from a university complex noted for its established role of producing leadership in the Black community.

It is recommended that immediate research into the area of cultural biases in personality testing be done; such that the waste of human potential and the resulting social discriminations, isolation, etc. associated with comparing groups in such an obviously biased fashion be ended at once. Further, recommended is a possible goal of rescaling the raw data for different subcultural groups on personality inventories.

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